

## Hebrew

### The Alphabet

Letter	Phonetic Value	Classical Hebrew	Modern Hebrew
א	ʔ	ʾ (ʔ)	ʔ
ב	v	v	v
ג	ɣ	g̃	g
ד	ð	d̥	d
ה	h	h	h
ו	w	w	v
ז	z	z	z
ח	ħ	ḥ	x (ch, kh)
ט	t̪ʰ	ṭ	t
י	j	y	y
כ (final ך)	x	x	x (ch, kh)
ל	l	l	l
מ (final ם)	m	m	m
נ (final ן)	n	n	n
ס	s	s	s
ע	ʕ	ʿ (ʕ)	ʔ
פ (final ף)	f	f	f (ph)
צ (final ץ)	s̪ʰ	ṣ	ts (tz)
ק	q	q	k
ר	r	r	r
ש	ʃ	š	š (sh)
ט	t̪	ś	s
ת	θ	ṭ	t (th)

## Begadkefat Letters

Historically, Classical Hebrew distinguished the plosives, i.e., b, g, d, k, p, t, from their spirant counterpart, i.e., v, ġ, ḏ, x, f, ṭ, through the sign *dāḡēš*. In Modern Hebrew, only three of these consonants are preserved with their spirant counterpart, i.e., b, k, p, v, x, f. The spirant counterparts of g, d, and t have been lost, and are realized as plosives.

Plosives		Spirants	
ב	b	ב	v
ג	g	ג	ġ
ד	d	ד	ḏ
כ	k	כ	x
פ	p	פ	f
ת	t	ת	ṭ

## The Vowels and Diphthongs

Hebrew vowels may be divided into three main categories, the reduced, the short, and the long vowels.

Diphthongs		Reduced		Short		Long	
אָ	aw	אֵ	āy	אִ	ă	אֵ	ā
אֵ	ay	אֵ	ě	אֵ	e	אֵ	ē
אֵ	ey	אֵ	ōy	אֵ	o	אֵ	ō
		אֵ	ūy	אֵ	u	אֵ	ū
		אֵ	ē	אֵ	ə	אֵ	ī
				אֵ	i	אֵ	ī

While each of these vowels were once pronounced with distinction, they are reduced to five short vowels, e.g., a, e, i, o, u. Regardless of their current phonetic value, the accents are used to distinguish the vowels from the reduced, short and long.

## The Transliteration of the Semivowels

In Hebrew there are three letters that function as vowels א *ʾāleḥ*, י *yōḏ*, and ו *wāw*. The letters have the following function:

## א 'Ālef

'Ālef is used in the following:

a) All initial vowels in Hebrew begin with 'ālef, i.e.,

'āhav	אָהַב	'ēhī	אָהִי	'ōnī	אָנִי	'ukkāf	אָכַף
'abbā	אָבָא	'ereṣ	אָרֶץ	'oxel	אָכַל	'ūvāl	אָוּבַל
'āvīv	אָבִיב	'ēm	אָם	'ōr	אָוֹר	'ivūl	אָבוּל
						'īš	אִישׁ

b) 'Ālef by default denotes the glottal-stop, and can occur in the beginning, middle, and end of word., i.e.,

'abbā	אָבָא
Yō'ēl	יוֹאֵל
qerī'āh	קְרִיאָה
ro's	רֹאשׁ
ne'āh	נֶאֱחַ
nābbī'	נָבִיא

## י Yōd

Yōd is used to represent:

a) Yōd represent the consonant y., i.e.,

yā'ēš	יָאֵשׁ
ḥayyīm	חַיִּים
'ūlāy	אוּלַי

b) Yōd preceded by *hīreq*, i.e., הֿ, denotes the long vowel ī., i.e.,

'īsī	אִיסִי
'īr	עִיר
pīl	פִּיל
pī	פִּי

## ו Wāw

Wāw is used to represent:

a) Wāw represent the consonant *w*., i.e.,

widda'	וִדַע
liwwūy	לווי
qahwāh	קהֹה
ṣaw	צו

b) Wāw preceded by *ḥōlem*, i.e., וְ, denotes the long vowel *ō*, and when preceded *šūreq*, i.e., וֹ, denotes the long vowel *ū*., i.e.,

'ōy	אוי
yōm	יום
'ēzō	איזו
'ūl	אול
šūr	שור
hū	הוא

## The Consonants

These letters ו, נ, ק, ש, ת, ט, י, which were once distinguished in classical Hebrew have become indistinguishable from א, כ, פ, ס, ת, ב, thus sharing a common phonology in Modern Hebrew., i.e.,

?	א	x	כ	s	ס
	ע		ח		ש
v	ב	k	פ	t	ת, ט
	ו		ק		ט

**NOTE:** While these letters ו, נ, ק, ש, ת, ט, י, are commonly transcribed as ?, x, k, s, t, and v. To avoid confusion with א, כ, פ, ס, ת, ב, they are transcribed as ʕ, ɰ, q, š, ʈ, ʦ, and w, despite current phonetic value.

Letters כ, פ, ק, ש, צ, are commonly transcribed as ch (kh), ph, k, sh, and tz (ts), but are transcribed instead x, f, q, š, ʃ, thus:

melex (not *melech* or *melekh*)      מֶלֶךְ

ḥayyīm (not <i>chaim</i> )	חַיִּים
'ēfōd (not <i>ephōd</i> )	אֶפֹּד
qāṣīr (not <i>katzir</i> )	קָצִיר
qabbālāh (not <i>kabbalah</i> )	קַבָּלָה
šemeš (not <i>shemesh</i> )	שֶׁמֶשׁ
ṣāddīq (not <i>tzaddik</i> )	צָדִיק

### The Transliteration of Loanwords and Names

Names or loanwords which have entered Hebrew are subjected to Hebrew writing and spelling conventions, thus the following are transliterated:

artist	'artīst	אַרְטִיסְט
biologic(al)	biyyōlōgī	בִּיּוֹלוֹגִי
philosophic(al)	fīlōsōfī	פִּילוֹסוֹפִי
piano	pyānō	פִּיאַנּוֹ
Washington	wōšīngtōn	וּוֹשִׁינְגְטוֹן
capillary	qappīlārī	קַפִּילָרִי
ritual	rītū'āl	רִיטוּאַל

### The Use of Diacritics and Orthographic Signs

#### ***Dāḡēš* (דָּגֵשׁ)**

*Dāḡēš* has only two functions, the distinction of the plosives and spirants (*dāḡēš qal*), and the latter the gemination or doubling of consonants (*dāḡēš ḥāzāq*).

#### ***Dāḡēš Qal* (דָּגֵשׁ קָל)**

As already mentioned in earlier sections, *dāḡēš qal* is used to differentiate between the plosives and the spirant consonants, particularly the *Begadkefat* letters.

In addition to the *begadkefat* letters, *dāḡēš qal* also marks the plosives whether in the beginning of a word, or when the preceding consonant is not followed by a vowel., i.e.,

barwāz	בָּרְז
karṭīs	כָּרְטִיס

mixtāv

מִכְתָּב

hizdannēv

הִזְדַּנֵּב

### ***Dāḡēš Ḥāzāq* (דָּגֵשׁ חֲזָק)**

*Dāḡēš Ḥāzāq* refers to the doubling of consonants, with the exception of the gutturals (e.g., א, ה, ח, ע, ר). *Dāḡēš Ḥāzāq* may occur in the following:

a) After the definite article, e.g., ה *ha-*, the following consonants are geminated, thus:

haš-šāmayim

הַשְּׁמַיִם

ham-mayim

הַמַּיִם

b) When the preposition, מן *min* becomes prefixed, e.g., מִ *mi-*, the following consonant is geminated, thus:

mis-sūs

מִסּוּס

mim-melex

מִמֶּלֶךְ

c) If the consonant is in between two vowels and is marked by *dāḡēš ḥāzāq*, it is geminated and is pronounced with prolongation, thus:

zakkūṭ

זַכּוּת

baddīl

בַּדִּיל

'ayyēh

אֵיָה

**NOTE:** While in Classical Hebrew *dāḡēš ḥāzāq* marks gemination, in Modern Hebrew this has been lost and are realized as short, thus: zakkūṭ > zakut, baddīl > badil, 'ayyēh > ayeh. This is true for the prefixes and articles, i.e., haš-šāmayim > ha-šamaim, mim-melex > mi-melex.

### ***Mappīq* (מַפִּיק)**

*Mappīq* sharing a similar form as *dāḡēš*, is used in to denote an audible final ה *hē'* in feminine pronouns in the third person singular, thus;

lāh

לָהּ

šellāh

שָׁלָהּ

sifrāh

סִפְרָהּ

### **Šwā' (Schwa / שיׁוּ)**

The subscript *šwā'*, i.e., ׀ , has two primary functions. The first function is to mark the absence of the vowels (*šwā' nāḥ*)., i.e.,

šoṭṭīm

שׁוֹטְטִים

mufsāq

מִפְסָק

The latter function is the audible *schwa*, i.e., ə (or e), this is known as *šwā' nā'*. This can occur in three ways:

a) When consonants form a cluster with letters ר, מ, נ, ל, י, the *schwa* is realized as e., i.e.,

rəfā'īm

רְפָאִים

nəšāmāh

נְשָׁמָה

ləvānīm

לְבָנִים

yəlāḏīm

יְלָדִים

b) Before the guttural consonants, i.e., א, ה, ח, ע, the *schwa* is realized as e., i.e.,

tə'ūnāh

תְּאוֹנָה

šə'ōnīm

שְׁעוֹנִים

zəhīrūt

זְהִירוֹת

c) If a consonant bearing *šwā'* is followed by a consonant bearing *šwā'*, the *šwā'* is realized as e., i.e.,

nivdəqāh

נִבְדָּקָה

tisgərū

תִּסְגְּרוּ

d) The *šwā'* in the inseparable prefixes, e.g., ל, ב, כ, is realized as e before a word., i.e.,

lə-melex

לְמֶלֶךְ

bə-melex

בְּמֶלֶךְ

kə-melex

כְּמֶלֶךְ

### The use of hyphen in the transliteration

When a word is preceded by the definite article, it is separated by a hyphen, i.e.,

hā-‘īr (not ha‘īr)	הַעִיר
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haš-šemeš (not haŠemeš)	הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
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haq-qāṣīr (not haQāṣīr)	הַקָּצִיר
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Like the articles, when the inseparable prefixes are joined to a word, a hyphen is written., i.e.,

bə-śāḏeh (not beŚāḏeh)	בְּשָׂדֶה
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kə-melex (not keMelex)	כְּמֶלֶךְ
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lə-māqōm (not leMāqōm)	לְמָקוֹם
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The conjunction ı wə ‘and’ is also separated by a hyphen in the transliteration, i.e.,

wə-has-sūs (not vahaSus)	וְהַסּוּס
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way-yo’mer (not vayomer)	וַיֹּאמֶר
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*Maqqāf*, e.g., - , used to connect two or more words to denote a single tone, is retained in the transliteration, i.e.,

kāl-’āḏām	כָּל-אָדָם
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’et-kāl-’ēšev	אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב
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